

## DOWN IS UP Proverbs 18:12

I want you to take a good look at this picture ... what do you see?



Now take a look at this picture and tell me what you see ...



Did you notice that this is the exact same picture but it is flipped upside down? So which would you rather be ... the first picture ... or the one that has been flipped upside down?

We are starting a new sermon series this morning titled “Against The Grain.” We are going to look at 11 concepts in the Bible where God turns the world’s view of life upside down. And the point we want to grasp is this ... the only way that we are going to be able to live an unhindered life is to live it in a way that seems to be upside down in this world.

This morning we want to see how down is up and up is down and I want to do that by sharing with you two biblical stories ... one from the Old Testament and one from the New.

The first story I want to share with you is about a King named Nebuchadnezzar. He was the King of Babylon. Babylon is almost always considered evil in the Bible. If you read the book of Revelation you see that Babylon is the enemy of God’s kingdom. But in this case ... we see that God uses Babylon for his own purpose. (That in itself kind of seems upside down).

Let me share with you why God uses Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. **2 KINGS 24:8** ... <sup>8</sup> Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he

reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan; she was from Jerusalem. <sup>9</sup> He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father had done.

God not only used Nebuchadnezzar but he also blessed him! Listen to what Daniel, a prophet of God says about him in **DANIEL 2:37 – 38A** ... <sup>37</sup> Your Majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; <sup>38</sup> in your hands he has placed all mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds in the sky. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all.

The problem with Nebuchadnezzar though is that he became very proud! In fact he became so proud that he had a statue of himself made that was 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide. And then he told all of those living under his power that they had to bow down and worship that statue or image.

Isn't it amazing how so many times God uses people for his Kingdom's sake and they become proud ... and they turn their eyes off of God and onto themselves. In fact that is at the very root of the definition of pride.

The Greek word for PRIDE is **ἀλαζονεία**. It is the concept of “pretentious pride ... the practice of ‘constantly talking about how great oneself is.’ It is self-elevation. It is turning your eyes upon yourself rather than God.

The story of Nebuchadnezzar is not over. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream and Daniel interprets it for him. He dreams about an angel telling him the following ... **DANIEL 4:14-16** ... <sup>4</sup> He called in a loud voice: ‘Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches. <sup>15</sup> But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field. ‘Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth. <sup>16</sup> Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him.

Daniel's interpretation is that because Nebuchadnezzar had become so proud he would be reduced to living like an animal in the fields. And here is what happened ... **DANIEL 4:33** ... Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate

grass like the ox. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.

That my friend is a prime example of where up is now down! **Pride will do that to you!** **PROVERBS 18:12 (NKJV)** puts it this way ... <sup>12</sup>Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, And before honor *is* humility.

We can learn some powerful lessons from Nebuchadnezzar ...

- 1 ... **Pride overestimates self.** Nebuchadnezzar became so powerful that he began thinking that he was God himself.
- 2 ... **Pride underestimates God.** Nebuchadnezzar forgot who put him in the powerful position he was in and thought he could do whatever he wanted without consequences. Listen ... our view of God ... no matter how high or low changes who God is! He is all powerful and no one ... not anyone comes close!
- 3 ... **Pride looks down on others.** Nebuchadnezzar began looking at everyone else as underlings! He expected them to bow down before him and worship him.
- 4 ... **Pride trips you up.** A man becomes blind when pride takes over his life. Nebuchadnezzar is a prime example of that. He was on top of the hill at one point ... became proud ... and then was eating grass off of that same hill.

Our world certainly encourages us to be proud ... doesn't it?

Watch this video clip ... **Clay Matthews "I'm the best"**

The world certainly wants us to see ourselves as the greatest ... to take great pride in who we are and what we do. BUT ... is that what God wants from us? I don't think so. I think he wants us to flip the picture upside down.

An unknown source was quoted as saying ... *God pickles the proud and preserves the foolish.*

I love how St. Augustine once said it ... *It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels.* (Brainyquotes.com)

Friends ... when it comes to pride ... Up is down!

**But let me share another story with you.** This story is the anti-thesis to the first one. This man in this story is the opposite of Nebuchadnezzar! Nebuchadnezzar

could certainly be the poster-child of “Down is Up”. This next man shows us God’s way ... “Down is Up”.

Turn with me to **PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8** ... <sup>5</sup> Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, <sup>7</sup> but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

There is no better example of humility ... the one word definition of “down is up” ... than Jesus Christ himself.

Jesus was sitting in a throne in the middle of Heaven. There were cherubim and seraphim constantly singing about how great he was. Everyone was bowing down before him. Even though Daniel said Nebuchadnezzar was the king of kings ... Jesus was and is truly the king of kings. He showed that when he reduced Nebuchadnezzar to the level of an animal. You cannot be in any higher position than that.

And yet **VERSE 5-7a** tells us that he took the most humble action. He gave up his equality with God and became a human being. Do you understand how humbling that is? It would be even bigger than Nebuchadnezzar being king and choosing of his own free will to leave his throne to become an animal.

Humility is God’s way ... Pride is the world’s way. Listen to **1 JOHN 2:16-17** ... *For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the **pride of life**—comes not from the Father but from the world. <sup>17</sup> The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.*

God has gone against the grain ... He has flipped the world’s thinking on its head. He has told us that Down is Up and Up is Down. He has told us that if we want to be like Christ then humility must be our driving force ... not pride.

**But he also tells us that humility ends in reward.**

Let’s read on in **PHILIPPIANS 2 ... VERSES 9-11** ... <sup>9</sup> Therefore (**key word**) God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Listen to what Jesus says about humility in his Sermon on the Mount ... **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (MATTHEW 5:3).**

*Teacher’s Commentary* defines ‘poor in spirit’ as ‘those who do not approach life with confidence in themselves.’ BUT ... look at the second part of the verse ... Those who do not approach life with confidence in themselves inherit the kingdom of heaven. Talk about down is up! There can be no better reward for humility than heaven!

**So here is the point of this sermon ... If you are proud, you will be brought down. If you are humble, you will be lifted up. Up is down and down is up!**

So what do I need to do to make sure I am not a proud person?

**1 ... See yourself as you really are**

Look at what it says in **ROMANS 12:3** ... **Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment.**

Friends ... the best way to keep yourself humble is to use Jesus Christ as your standard. How do you compare to him? When I look at my own life I have to wonder if the Apostle Paul was right when he said he was the ‘Chief of sinners.’ I think maybe he was really talking about me.

We cannot do one good thing on our own ... not one. The only way anything good can come out of us is if God does it through us! With that in mind ... what can I possibly see in my life that gives me the incentive to be puffed up? When I really look at who I am ... that is outside of Christ ... there is nothing to be proud about.

**2 ... Lift others up**

**PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4** ... **Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.**

We live in a “me first” generation. It is all about me. But God says that is not the way Christians are to live. They choose to put others before themselves. Is that an easy thing to do? No ... especially when you have that pride laying right under the surface ready to spring forth. We cannot even do this unless we allow God to do it in us! Which is another reason to not be proud!

And then the third thing to keep in mind is ...

### 3 ... Give God the glory

Listen to this passage carefully ... **COLOSSIANS 1:16-17** ... For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

God is the one who deserves the glory for everything because all things originate in him. Every good thing that happens goes right back to him. For us to take the glory for anything is robbing that glory from the one who deserves it.

I talked to a pastor recently that was once a youth minister. He was telling me how frustrated he was with the preaching pastor he was working with. He said that he would give the preacher an idea and if the pastor thought it was a good idea, he would take it to the leadership as if it was his own idea.

That is what we do when we take credit for any good deed we might do. Our responsibility is to give God the glory in everything we say ... do ... or become. He deserves that ... he is the one that makes it happen.

So what is it going to be ... pride or humility? Do you want to go from up to down ... or down to up?

God has flipped the picture of what the world pushes (SHOW PICTURE #1) on its head (SHOW PICTURE #2). With God ... UP is Down and Down is up? Which picture do you want to be?